

THE CHURCH IN GOD

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Introduction: Paul in Thessalonica

I. Its Position

1. "In God", v.1. In the sphere of fellowship & union with God; grounded in the power of God

2. "In the Lord Jesus Christ"

A. Here we have Paul's Christology.

The rich theological content of each word.

He places "the Lord Jesus Christ" in the same category and on the same plane with "God the Father."

It suggests, if it does not demand, the equality of Jesus Christ with God the Father - (Wms.)

B. This phrase specifies the Christian character of the Assembly (or church) in contrast with the civic assembly of the gentiles or religious assembly of the Jews.

It is not used outside these letters.

C. When a man is in Christ, or in God, or in the Spirit, he is under the control of a divine power that makes for newness of life.

D. Both the Christian church, and its members individually, are declared by the Bible to be "in Christ" (see 2:14 and 4:16).

They are in spiritual organic union with Christ, as set forth by Christ Himself in His parable of the vine and the branches, Jn. 15.

3. The Basis of this position is GRACE

4. The blessing resulting from this position is described by the word PEACE.

II. Its Progress, v. 3

1. Work of Faith

A. Faith is the beginning point

B. The church was composed largely of poor people who "in deep poverty" "work with their hands"

2. Labor of love, (fatiguing toil)

The prominence of women in its membership

3. Patience of Hope, endurance, remaining under burden. This kind of life in the Thessalonians convinced the missionaries of their divine election, v.4.

III. Its Power, v.5

1. Spiritual power manifested in the preachers themselves
2. The power of the gospel in behalf of the hearers.
3. Their response to this gospel
4. The assurance, or absolute certainty, which this brings.

IV. Its Persecution, v.6

1. Much affliction;

It had sprung up amid persecution, (Acts 17:6)

2. With Joy.

Luther said, "If Christ wore a crown of thorns, why should His followers expect only a crown of roses?"

V. Its Pattern, v.7

1. Their conversion, v.9

A. They were mostly gentiles who voluntarily entered upon a new slavery.

"My glorious Victor, Prince Divine,
Clasp these surrendered hands in Thine.

At length my will is all Thine own,
Glad vassal of a Savior's throne.

My Master, lead me to Thy door:

Pierce this new willing ear once more:

Thy bonds are freedom; let me stay

With Thee to toil, endure, obey." H.C.C. Moule

C. The essential of conversion is turning from sin to God.

2. Their testimony

A. They imitated Paul; others imitated them.

B. They had evangelized their own country of Greece, and were known in every place for their faith and for their missionary vision, v.8.

3. Their expectation of Christ's return, v.10.

A. The hope of Christ's return was very real in this young church.

B. The Christ they were waiting for.

The Risen Son of God.

Jesus who delivers, saves, ransoms.

Christ saved; He saves; He will save.

Over against the believer's hope, the Scriptures set the unbeliever's doom, "a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries."

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